

# Sen. Wirch: GOP should honor MIA service members and their families by funding MIA recovery project

Posted on Thursday, Sep 15, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

**Madison-** Senator Bob Wirch (D-Somers) is honoring National POW/MIA Recognition Day, a time to remember those service members who have never come home from the battlefield and pay tribute to the sacrifices they and their families have made. At the same time, Wirch is taking Wisconsin Republicans to task for their obstruction of state funding for a program to identify and recover the remains of American service members missing in action.

“As a veteran of the Army Reserves, I can’t imagine the suffering that families of POW/MIA service members must go through. It’s difficult to truly grieve and heal without knowing the ultimate fate of your loved one. That is what makes Republican efforts to block funding for the UW-Madison MIA Project all that more frustrating and infuriating. It’s nothing less than shameful, partisan politics at its worst,” Wirch said.

Since 2015, UW-Madison has run the MIA Project, through which a team of faculty, staff and students from a number of different fields assist in the discovery, exhumation, identification and return of remains of missing-in-action American service members. The federal Department of Defense currently lists 81,500 American service members as still “missing in action”. The MIA Project has brought closure to a number of families who had waited decades for answers on the fates of their loved ones. During the 2019-2020 legislative session, Wirch co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would have provided \$180,000 per year for the Project; Republican leadership denied that bill a vote before the end of the session. Governor Evers included the funding in his 2021-2023 state budget proposal before Republicans rejected it, saying they would pass standalone legislation. That bill,

which Wirch again sponsored, wasn't brought to a vote in the Assembly before Republicans leadership gaveled out to end the 2021-2022 legislative session.

The third Friday in September is designated as National POW/MIA Recognition Day, which this year falls on September 16. It began in 1979 through an act of Congress at the urging of the families of more than 2,500 Vietnam War POW/MIAs. The purpose is to ensure that Americans remember those who served and never returned.